



## BIG BEAVER FALLS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Chairman Ajit Pai  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW,  
Washington, DC 20554

October 20, 2017

Dear Chairman Pai,

I am writing today in response to the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Public Notice which, among other things, considers changes to the E-Rate program. Before delving into my response to the proposed changes, I want to thank the FCC for your continued support for the E-Rate program and for the critical programmatic and policy changes the commission adopted in 2014. The E-Rate program provides critical discounts to assist schools (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access.

The Big Beaver Falls School District has relied on E-rate Category 2 funding to level the playing field and minimize the digital divide that is so pervasive in our community. In order for us to successfully educate our children that come from a challenging home environment we must have the tools to engage in a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum. Without the funding the FCC will create another of many hurdles for our students to jump over in order to compete in a modern technical society.

The E-Rate program is a program succeeding in its mission. As the FCC moves forward with this public notice, it is prudent to remain focused on the fact that E-Rate is a program that works. Any changes to the E-Rate program should be focused on expanding a successful program that has yet to reach its full potential and ensuring the FCC remains a good steward of the changes adopted 2014, allowing those changes to progress and play out as intended.

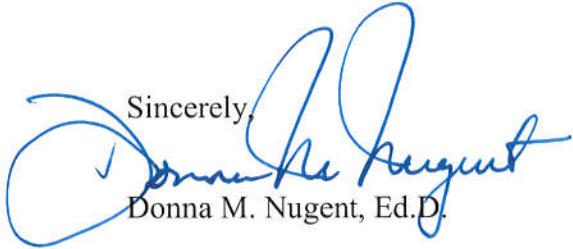
E-Rate played a critical role in the rapid and significant expansion of connectivity in schools, and the 2014 modernization was a much needed update to ensure more schools and libraries are connected to broadband. The E-Rate's investment in Category 2 Wi-Fi and internal connections funding is extremely valuable and could not be replaced by school, district or state funds.

Our district's entire backbone infrastructure has been provided through the E-rate Category 2 funding program. Without this funding we would not have the robust infrastructure that provides wireless service, networking service and security to our district's data. Without the funding we will have to rely on local taxes and put a greater burden on a struggling community. All of our infrastructure including switches, wiring and firewall have been installed by our own staff to

give our kids the best technology experience possible. Our Technology Director is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and has made our network as reliable and powerful as that of more affluent schools and taking this funding away would open the door to future hardware failures and compromises that will damage our educational process.

In closing, I reiterate my district's continued, strong support for and reliance upon the E-Rate program for being able to access and afford the high-speed connectivity that is so central to our students' learning. Thank you for considering these comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Donna M. Nugent". The signature is stylized with large, flowing loops and a checkmark-like flourish at the beginning.

Donna M. Nugent, Ed.D.